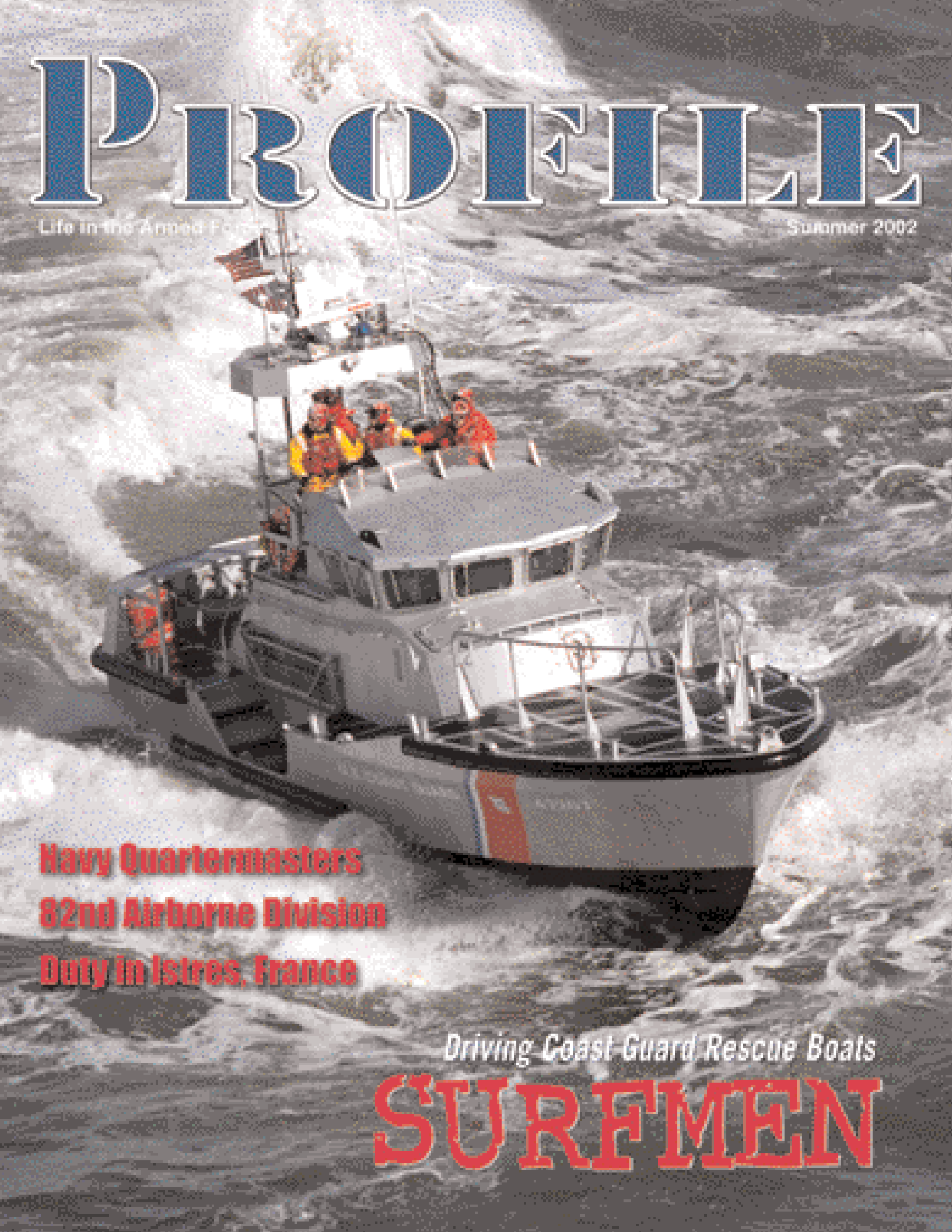
PROFILE

Life in the Armed F[illegible]

Summer 2002



Navy Quartermasters

82nd Airborne Division

Duty in Istres, France

Driving Coast Guard Rescue Boats

SURFMEN

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The Honorable Gordon R. England
Chief of Information
Rear Adm. Stephen R. Pietropaoli, USN

Director
Lt. Cmdr. Gilbert A. Mendez, USN
Deputy Director
Maj. Michael Durham, USA
Managing Editor
Master Sgt. Scott Clough, USAF
Production Manager

Circulation
Tech. Sgt. Sherrilyn Dean, USAF
Staff Writer
Cpl. Chad Swaim, USMC

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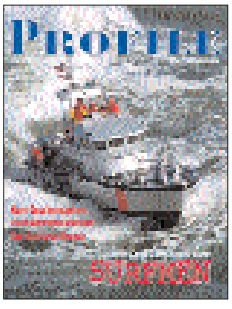
Send questions or concerns to Profile at:
DoD High School News Service
9420 Third Ave., Suite 110
Norfolk, VA 23511-2129
Tele: (757) 444-1442 or E-Mail
sdean@force.cnsl.spear.navy.mil
sclough@force.cnsl.spear.navy.mil.

Contents of Profile are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Navy.

Features

ON THE COVER

A US Coast Guard 47-foot motor life boat works the surf on the Columbia River bar in the Pacific Ocean. (Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Bruce E. Borthwick)



Apply Online for Navy ROTC Scholarships

The Chief of Naval Education and Training (CNET) recently unveiled an updated Naval ROTC Web site and online application, simplifying access to program information and streamlining the application process for Naval ROTC scholarships.

The change was made to incorporate newer technology into the Website and to provide customers with a more user-friendly format, according to Chief of Naval Education and Training, Vice Adm. Alfred G. Harms Jr.

"A lot of work has gone into this project, both on the part of CNET staff members and contractors, who worked together to launch the new site," said Harms. "It was the right thing to do for our customers, and we are very pleased with the initial feedback we're getting from students and family members."

The site provides general information on the Naval ROTC program, as well as specific information for individuals who have submitted scholarship applications. The Website also has links to the Naval ROTC units and their associated cross-town schools.

"Our goal was to determine the best format for presenting Naval ROTC program information," said C. J. Stein, CNET's Officer Accessions program manager. "We needed something visually appealing and interesting that would catch and hold the attention of our younger, computer-savvy audience, and it also had to be easy to navigate for parents and other family members who help students through the Naval ROTC scholarship process."

The electronic application allows students to apply online for 4-year Navy, Marine, and Nurse-option Naval ROTC scholarships. The application can be filled out in segments, saved, and submitted when complete. The system will perform an error check before accepting the application, and notify the applicant of required corrections.

When the completed application is received, it is routed to an officer recruiter in the area where the applicant resides. There are a few more steps to finalize after submitting the electronic application, but the majority of information is provided electronically.

Applicants and family members may track the status of the application by going to the Website and inputting the applicant's social security number and birth date. The system will provide information regarding the progress of the application including whether or not the individual was selected for a scholarship, and the college or university to which their scholarship is assigned.

Individuals desiring more information on applying for a Naval ROTC scholarship, or who do not have access to a computer, may visit their nearest Navy recruiter, or call to request a paper copy of the application. To find the nearest Navy recruiter call 1-800-USA-NAVY, or visit www.navy.com.

For more information, visit the Naval ROTC website at https://www.nrotc.navy.mil, or contact the Naval ROTC program office in Pensacola, Fla., toll free at 1-800-NAV-ROTC ext. 29380/29387. *CNET Public Affairs*

Go Army, Get Certified

The United States Army has added a new component to its GI to Jobs Program that will assist soldiers in understanding and obtaining certification for civilian jobs when they leave the service.

Those soldiers now have a website, called Army Credentialing Opportunities Online (Army COOL), where they can learn what civilian certifications relate to their Military Occupational Specialty career field and how to obtain them.

"This new Web site explains differences between military and civilian training and certification requirements, and it does so in easy-to-understand language," Sergeant Major of the Army Jack Tilley said. "The program and the Web site tell soldiers exactly what they need to do to begin and complete the certification process in their MOS."

Under this initiative, soldiers will know what is necessary to complete certification or licensure requirements for jobs related to approximately 100 military occupational specialty. All MOS-applicable credentialing examinations are clearly identified and articulated, by MOS, to ensure success.

Some occupations have certain professional and technical standards. The process of meeting these standards and earning official recognition (in the form of credentials, licenses or certificates) is called credentialing. Private and government organizations set credentialing standards to ensure that individuals meet the standards for their profession. There are two primary types of credentialing, licensure and certification; licenses are granted by government agencies (federal, state and local) and certification is granted by non-government agencies (professional, industry, proprietary, and apprenticeship).

The GI to Jobs initiative will be integrated with the Army's Partnership for Youth Success programs. PaYS is a recruiting initiative that was initially developed by the U. S. Army Recruiting Command to appeal to young people who are interested in having a quality civilian job after serving in the Army.

For more information, visit www.ArmyEducation.Army.Mil/COOL and www. armypays.com. *Army News Service.*

New DOD Tuition Assistance Program

Service members soon will benefit from a new Department of Defense tuition assistance program that pays 100 percent of the cost of tuition for off-duty courses.

Effective Oct. 1, 2002, the program will pay will pay tuition

costs and mandatory fees for up to a maximum of $250 per semester hour or $750 per 3-hour course. The program includes a maximum per year tuition assistance cap of $4,500.

AF ROTC

Air Force commercials on television seek people who are up for a challenge, encouraging them to walk into a local recruiting office and sign on the dotted line.

But how does a person enter into the officer corps? Most join Air Force ROTC.

ROTC is by far the largest single commissioning source of Air Force second lieutenants. According to Air Force Personnel Center figures, ROTC is responsible for commissioning more than 41 percent of the active officer population.

Traditionally, people join ROTC right out of high school or during their college careers; however, that is not always the case. Opportunities exist for enlisted people to earn a commission through ROTC.

SOAR, or Scholarships for Outstanding Airmen to ROTC, is one way.

"SOAR is a scholarship program designed for enlisted people in the force with less than six years service," said Wanda Kirkpatrick, an educational counselor at the education center here. "SOAR applicants are tagged by their supervisors or commanders as strong performers with exceptional potential."

Those selected for SOAR separate from the active-duty Air Force, join an Air Force ROTC detachment and become full-time college students. After graduation, they become second lieutenants with a four-year commitment.

Air Education and Training Command News Service

(Above) The Honorable Gordon England, center, signs a poster for the students at his high school alma mater while students, and the school President, Brother James Kelly look over his shoulder.

Education is the Best Defense

Remembering the lessons and values learned at school goes a long way in taking care of business and of achieving success. That success may affect just a few or may ripple throughout the country and around the world.

Gordon R. England, the Secretary of the Navy, is a native of Baltimore, Md. He grew up in a working class family and lived in a typical row house, and he learned many of life's lessons at Mount St. Joseph's High School.

"Education is a way to realize your potential in life," England said at a recent visit to his alma mater. "For millions of Americans, great high schools like this have been the fertile grounds where dreams have grown."

President George Bush appointed England to his current post in May of 2001. From the beginning, England has traveled almost continuously around the globe and around the clock meeting with military personnel and civilians alike. A return to Mount St. Joseph's sparked the secretary's belief in the importance of education. His mantra regarding individual worth; "No one is more important than anyone else," was a lesson learned as a student of St. Joseph's.

In addition to the inherent political and financial battles associated with his new job, England was also confronted with the drama of September 11th. "We should never take this country for granted," he said, "Freedom is not free. The war against terrorism is a fight that previous generations have fought for us, and one that we must win for those of the future. Now more than ever, our nation is depending on your generation."

"Mr. England was received very positively by the students here," said Brother James Kelly, President of Mount St. Joseph's. "Having been one of them himself, he knew exactly to whom he was talking. The importance he placed on benefits gained through education is very much in keeping with the philosophy of the school. That those benefits can be given back to society through public service is even more so."

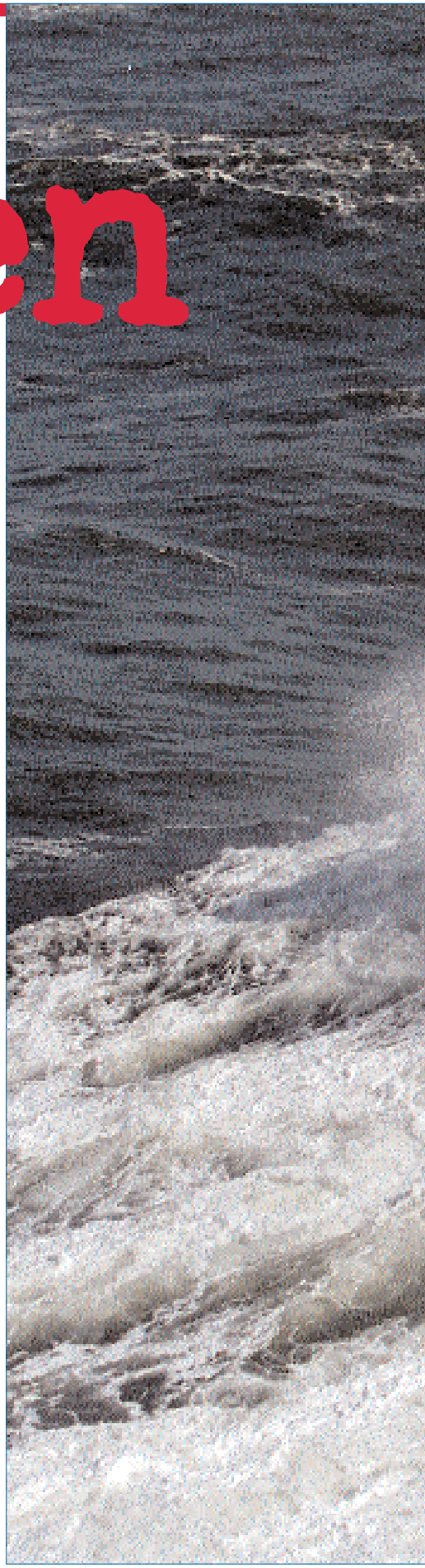
England recalls his academic years with fondness and respect, recognizing that while at high school, he learned some of life's most important lessons. "A great educational system doesn't just teach young people how to make a living, it teaches how to make a life," he said, "This school, more than any other, truly lives up to the Winston Churchill quote, "We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give."

Story by Petty Officer 2nd Class Mark O'Donald USNR. Photo by Chief Petty Officer Dolores L. Parlato

Surfmen

What It Takes to Break the Bar

Story by Petty Officer Jaime Bigelow



It is a beautiful day on the Oregon coast. Petty Officer 1st Class Ward Halstead sits restlessly in the warm sunlight filtered through the galley windows at Coast Guard Station Umpqua River in Salmon Harbor, Ore. The tall, broad-shouldered sailor has been in the Coast Guard for 18 years, and has been driving rescue boats for over a decade. He is a surfman, one of the Coast Guard's elite rescue boat sailors.

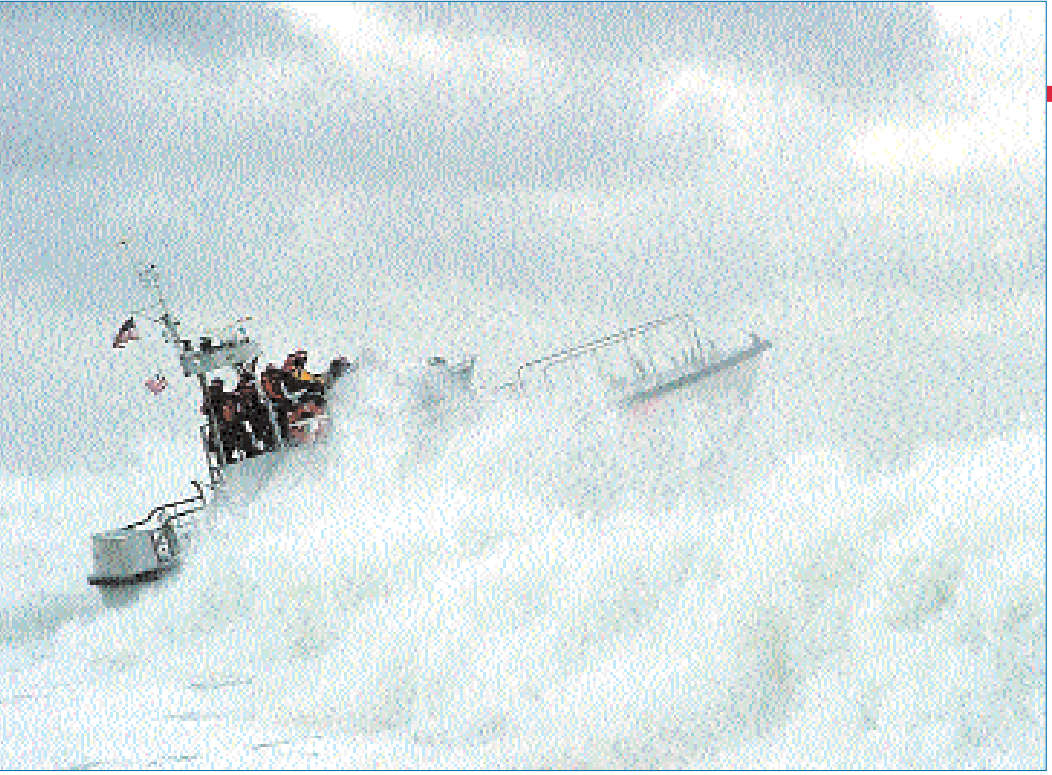
"Here you have a direct opening to the ocean, plus deep water, waves coming into an area that isn't as deep as the shelf on the Atlantic coast," Halstead said. "It's different here. It's the power of the rivers and the slope of the beach that cause the breaking conditions that you get."

Waves tend to break the hardest at the shallow area, or bar, of an inlet. Ocean currents, which travel hundreds of miles, collide with river currents. The force of these opposing currents, coupled with a coastal storm can push mariners into a tantrum of 25-foot breaking waves and 75-knot winds. Here, in the Pacific Northwest, inlets are flanked by jagged rock walls, which can tear a vessel apart in minutes.

"It's an unforgiving place. This bar is really bad; it's evil in its own way," said Halstead. "There's a reason why a lot of people don't come back. It's hard to read and it has its own little quirks and its own little dangers. Mostly because of the style of the breaks and the ferocity of them."

Since the beginning of the United States Life Saving Service in 1871, which

A 47-foot motor life boat in the surf on the Columbia River Bar. (Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Bruce E. Borthwick)



(Above) Coast Guard 47-foot motor lifeboat practices surf drills in 25-foot waves. Search and rescue coxwains train in heavy surf to maintain their proficiency in heavy weather to be always ready to assist a mariner in distress. (Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Sarah Foster-Snell

later became the Coast Guard, and its subsequent expansion to the west, thousands of mariners have been pulled from an ocean plagued by the ill-tempered weather of the Pacific coast.

"Weather is our sole purpose. That's our whole reason of existence on these bars. We have to respect it, know it and be familiar with it, because that's our adversary," said Halstead.

You have to go out, but ...

Early surfmen in the 1800s played host to a flood of danger. With primitive boats and limited resources, many lost their lives, or were seriously injured in the process of saving the lives of others. Even the rigorous training exercises proved fatal to some.

As with other past establishments that perform their duties under such perilous conditions, the nineteenth century surfmen had a dark creed to explain their commitment. Station skippers would often remind their crews that the regulations said they had to go out, but said nothing of coming back.

According to Dr. Robert Browning, Coast Guard Historian, an excerpt from the 1899 edition of Regulations for the Life Saving Service, or "Blue Book" as it is often referred to, may provide an explanation.

Article VI "Action at Wrecks" reads, "The statement of the keeper that he did not try to use the boat because the sea or surf was too heavy will not be accepted unless attempts to launch it were actually made and failed."

This section of the regulations remained in force after the Life Saving Service merged with the Revenue Cutter Service in 1915 to create the United States Coast Guard. The new Instructions for United States Coast Guard Stations, 1934 edition, copied the same section, word for word, as it appeared in 1899.

According to Petty Officer First Class Scott Lowry, a modern day surfman at Coast Guard Station Umpqua River, making it back to the station after a rescue is mandatory. Along with his responsibility to the victims of a distress, it is his obligation to see that his crew gets back in one piece.

"I've gotta come back," Lowry said. "I agree, to a point that we do have to go out, but we have to come back too."

"I've got a crew with me, and it's my job to keep them safe. If I don't think I can get them back, then maybe I shouldn't go. That's where the line is drawn."

Today's surfmen are well aware of the continuing risk involved in coastal search and rescue. Two years ago, a sobering tragedy at a small inlet in Washington state reinforced that risk.

Down to Earth

On Feb. 12, 1997, four Coast Guardsmen from Station Quillayute River in La Push, Wash., responded to a distressed sailboat at the mouth of the Quillayute River. Minutes after they left the dock, the crew found themselves in 30-foot breaking seas and 75-knot winds. The immense storm threw their 44-foot motor lifeboat onto the jagged rocks near the river mouth. As waves pounded the helpless craft, three of the crewmembers, Petty Officer 2nd Class David Bosley, Petty Officer 3rd Class Matthew Schlimme and Seaman Clinton Miniken, were washed from the boat and died. One crewman, Seaman Apprentice Benjamin Wingo, who had arrived at the station from boot camp only two weeks before, miraculously survived with moderate injuries. It was the first time that lives had been lost from the presumably indestructible 44-foot motor lifeboat.

According to Lowry, the disaster brought a new sense of vulnerability to the search and rescue community.

"First reaction was disbelief," Lowry said. "After all these years of good, reliable service out of our motor lifeboats, we actually lost a boat crew."

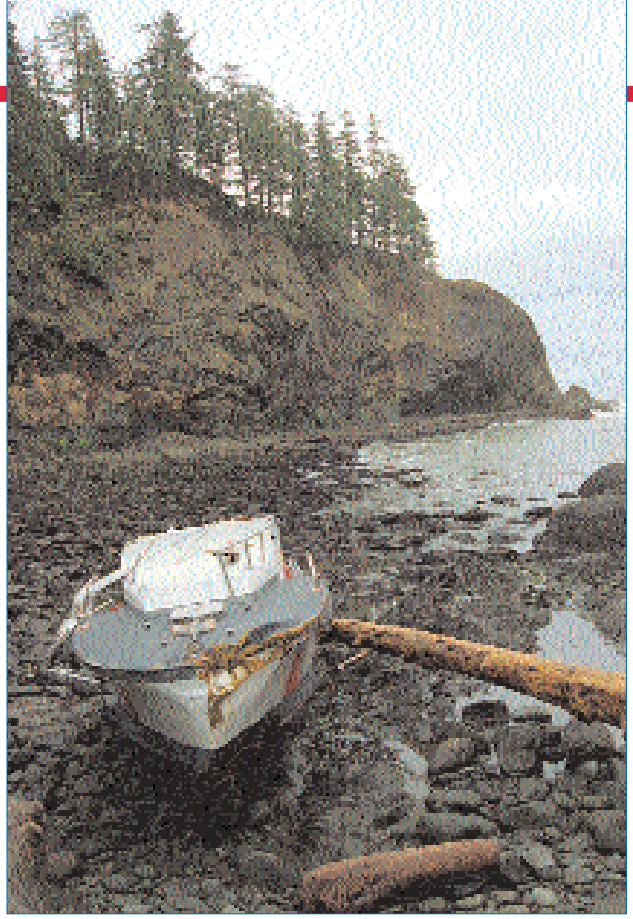
Lowry said that it has also had an affect on the decision making process involved in being a surfman.

"It goes back to judgement and reality checks. These boats aren't invincible and neither are our people," Lowry said. "I'm confident in my abilities, and I'm confident in the new boats and their abilities. It just makes you think more. You know what can happen, what has happened."

After the accident, the Coast Guard re-examined the way small boat stations operate. In the past, surfmen who put in years of training at a coastal station, were often transferred to a unit where they could no longer practice their skills, such as a ship or an inland unit. This was required for them to be promoted into more senior positions. Subsequently, they would loose their surfman qualifications due to lack of application, and their replacements at the stations would have to go through the years of training just to qualify.

Now, people that go through the rigorous training to become a surfman remain at a unit longer and, when ready for reassignment, they are sent to units that use their skills. They are no longer required to serve aboard other non-surf units to be promoted to senior positions. This has created a better rotation for qualified people and a higher level of experience in the field.

Along with the changes to assignment procedures, more emphasis has been placed on risk assessment as a clear part



(Above) The 44-foot motor lifeboat lies grounded on a rocky shore at James Island, Wash. The top portion of the boat had been torn away and several dents mar its white hull. Three Coast Guardsmen died when the boat capsized as they responded to a distress call from a dismasted sailboat. (Photo by PA3 Della Price)

of the leadership role that the job demands. Surfmen are taught to analyze the situation and to know all the factors involved before they react.

According to Halstead, it's important to keep a clear head when the search and rescue alarm is sounded, and know what he and his crew are facing.

"The first thing I want to do is focus," said Halstead. "Staying focused is the key. We're not going to charge straight in, not knowing what the conditions are.

"Obviously, if they're right on the bar, we're going to need back-up. We're going to need to get helicopters in the air and we're going to need to illuminate. We need someone out there on the jetty popping flares for us. We're going to be busy."

Baptism

As in the days of wooden surfboats and beach rescues, training is the backbone of a surf crew. Potential surfman start out as standard small-boat drivers called coxswains, which, in itself, requires more than a year of training. Coxswains are taught the "ins and outs" of navigation, boat handling, boat towing, emergency drills and other facets of maritime search and rescue. Coxswains are well qualified to meet the demands at most stations, even in heavy weather conditions. However, inlets with surf zones like Umpqua river, demand more intensive training.

Only a small percentage of coxswains go on to participate in the more than two-year training process needed to become a surfman.

Trainees are taught according to the conditions of each individual unit. They learn the nature of the inlet as well as what to do, how to do it and when to do it.

Hours are spent proving themselves in the surf. They repeat high stress maneuvers over and over until their mentors say they are ready. Then they are put through an intensive qualification board, which, if they pass, will earn them the respected surfman's pin. The crossed oar and boat hook that make up the device are the same that were worn by Life Saving Service members of the late 1800's and early 1900□s. It stands as a symbol of dedication to the job and a reminder of commitment to the long legacy of surfmen. There are only about 75 individuals at surf stations currently qualified to wear the pin.

Lowry doesn't believe the job is for everybody.

"It takes certain people. There are people out there that have natural ability and there are people out there that have to be taught how to drive a boat. The person that has to be taught how to drive a boat, how to react, is going to have a much tougher time in the process than someone who picks it up naturally."

According to Halstead, trainees are not only required to perform the designated performance standards, but must also meet the approval of their superiors.

"When I do a check-ride, I would rather see a guy mess up and handle it, then someone do it picture perfect," Halstead said. "The person that never makes a mistake, never gets into a bad predicament, that's the person you need to watch because he's the one that you don't know can handle it. I'd rather see them get into a bad situation and get themselves out. That's why we have training."

Tools of the Trade

The days of wooden lifeboats and white-knuckled oarsmen are far behind. Now, with the advent of new rescue crafts, cases can be handled with much more control and safety than ever before. The role of the surfman has been enhanced.

The surfman's latest craft of choice, the impressive 47-foot motor lifeboat, was carefully designed to replace the aging fleet of 44-foot motor lifeboats that were built in the mid-1960s. The 47-footers are capable of taking on 25-foot breaking surf and wind gusts of more than 50 mph. Like their predecessors, if rolled over by strong surf, they are able to right themselves in less than 10 seconds.

The powerful new rescue craft can respond at speeds of 26 knots and has a range of 200 nautical miles. State of the art navigation systems help crews find their way through any weather, and electronically controlled diesel engines ensure that the boat arrives on-scene in good time; it's a far cry from the days of oars and hand-guided rudders.

Physics

Over the years, equipment and training have changed, but the laws of nature have remained constant. One square yard of water in a driving wave can exert one ton of force. No technology can change that.

For more than 100 years, there have been talented mariners, such as the crew of Coast Guard Station Umpqua River, committed to pushing through the laws of nature. They stand watch, around the clock, and remain ready. As a result, thousands of ill-fated mariners have been pulled from the tangling arms of an angry ocean to the safety of dry land.

"I went out a couple of times where I really didn't like it, you will sometimes," remarks Halstead. " There's only one thing you have to do: look back at those poor guys that used to pull oars in old wooden lifeboats wearing hardly anything, doing much harder rescues. Think about what we have to work with now. They made it; I can make it."

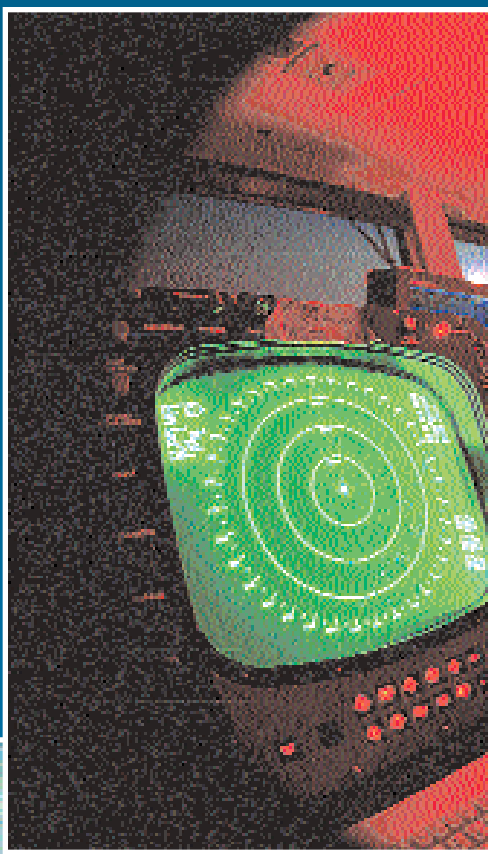
For more information about the United States Coast Guard, contact 1-800-NOW-USCG or visit www.gocoastguard.com

QUARTERMASTERS

At sea, QMs serve as the principle assistants to the officers tasked with the safe navigation of the ship. They procure, correct, use and stow navigational and oceanographic publications and charts.

While on watch, they plot the course of the ship using charts and electronic/satellite navigational aids. They are also trained in the centuries-old technique of navigating by the stars.

As they gain more experience and seniority, QMs serve in charge of tugs, self-propelled barges and other small craft.



(Above Left) Petty Officer 3rd Class Nicholas Coleman from Provo, Utah, monitors an SPA-25-G radar console on the USS George Washington's navigational bridge. (Photo by Seaman Andrew Morrow)

(Above) Petty Officer 2nd Class Sherman Evans inspects a sextant on the ship's navigational bridge. Sextants are used to measure angular distances between celestial bodies in determining a ship's latitude and longitude. (Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class R. David Valdez)

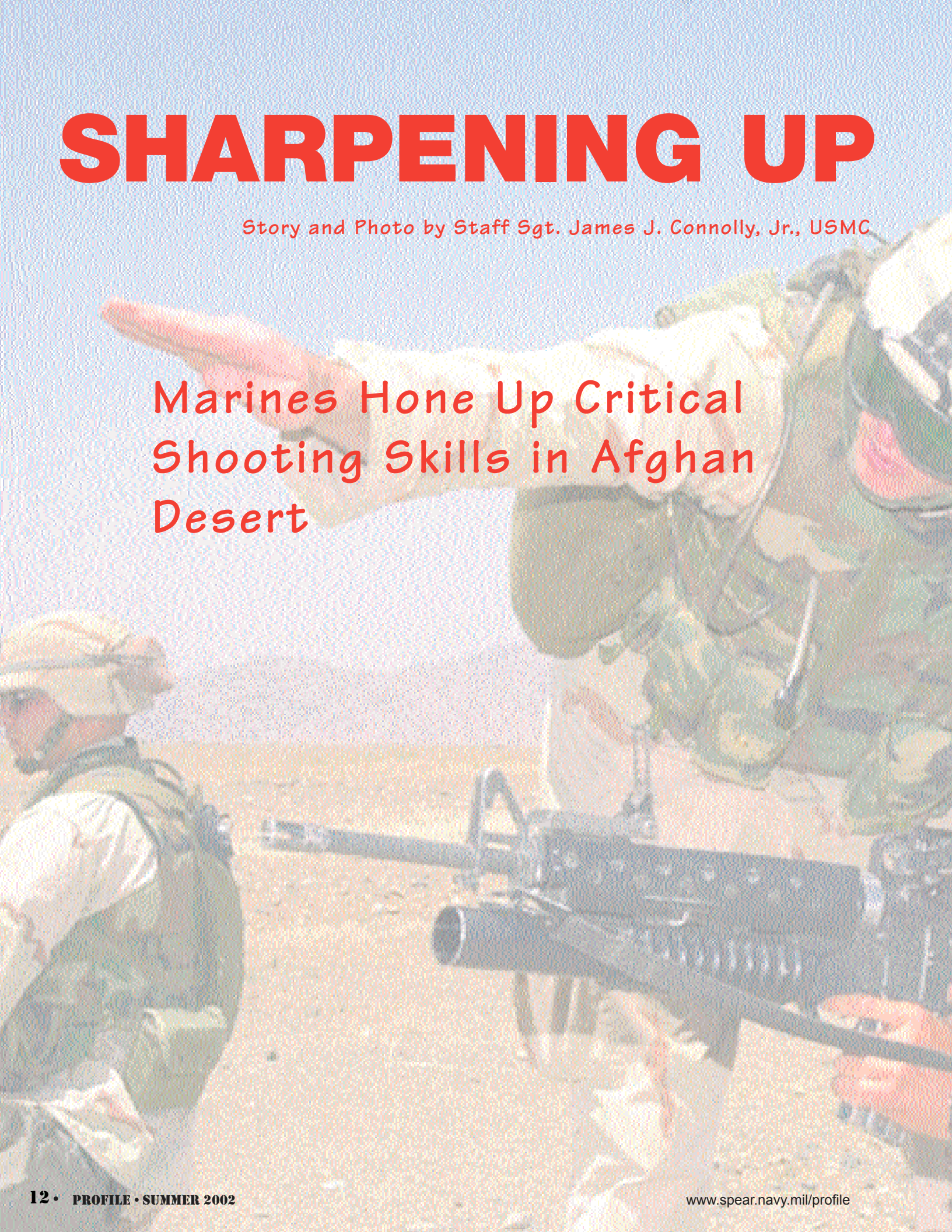
(Far Left) Petty Officer 3rd Class Nick Coleman from Provo, Utah, attempts to adjust the ship's course, while standing helm of the bridge watch, during a General Quarters drill aboard the aircraft carrier USS George Washington. (Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Summer Anderson)

(Left) Seaman Katrina Jimenez from San Francisco, Calif., assigned to the USS Lassen, plots the ship's current position during an exercise. (Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Ted Banks)

SHARPENING UP

Story and Photo by Staff Sgt. James J. Connolly, Jr., USMC

Marines Hone Up Critical Shooting Skills in Afghan Desert



With the soaring peaks of the Hindu-Kush mountains near Kabul, Afghanistan, as a backdrop, leathernecks from the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (Anti-Terrorism Unit) conducted live fire training to build familiarity of and confidence in their weapons. "We wanted to further develop our skills with the M203 (40mm Grenade Launcher), in particular with accuracy," explained 2nd Lt. Kevin Walsh, commander of 2nd Platoon, Company K, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment. In addition, the Marines also put the M240G Medium Machine Gun through its paces.

Putting accurate fire on target required the Marines to determine the battle-sight-zero for each weapon, a process that involves manipulating the weapons' sights in order to find the settings required to engage a target under ideal weather conditions.

For the Marines, the training was a welcome break from the daily mission of manning guard posts throughout the U.S. Embassy compound in Kabul, which they have done since arriving in country in early April.

"(The training) was a good experience, especially with the M240G," said 23-year-old Cpl. Rodolfo Ceron of Madisonville, Texas, a 2nd Platoon team leader. Ceron added that it was his first time firing the weapon. "It was like an adrenaline rush. I was just holding down the trigger and letting rounds go down range."

Lance Cpl. James Mink, a team leader with 3rd Platoon agreed that while the training was exhilarating, it also made him more comfortable with a weapon he wouldn't normally use.

"The training felt really good, because we have a lot of guys who've probably never fired the M240G before," explained the 21-year-old native of Wauchula, Fla. "With getting hands-on (training) with the M240G, for instance if a machine gunner goes down...we will be able to pick up the weapon and take care of business."

For Cpl. Alejandro Galvez, the extra practice time with the weapons boosted confidence in his abilities to use the sights and make whatever adjustments necessary to hit the target.

"It definitely helped my confidence and I did better than I expected," said the 20-year-old native of Mecca, Calif., adding that he was able to determine the BZO for his brand new M203 40MM Grenade Launcher during the shoot.

Additionally, Galvez said he was able to dispel doubts he had about the weapons' quadrant sight, which is used when precision is required out to the maximum effective ranges of 150 meters for a small, single target and 350 meters for large, multiple targets. "I had never shot with a quadrant sight before, and didn't think it would be very accurate, but it actually is."

As a result, Walsh feels the lessons learned during this evolution will pay off in the long run. "It's important for us to keep our skills sharp and to emphasize training at all times," he explained. "So that when situations like this come around, whether we're at the embassy or doing other missions, we know that our Marines have their professional skills developed at a very high level."

For more information about the United States Marine Corps, contact 1-800-MARINES or visit www.marines.com

BECOMING AN ALL

Story by Sgt. John Love, USA and Spec. William Patterson, USA

Originally published in Soldier's Magazine, October 2001

Each year more than 5,000 soldiers - volunteers twice over - join the proud ranks of the famed 82nd Airborne Division

As he sat on the tarmac waiting to board an Air Force C-130 at Pope Air Force Base, N.C., Pfc. Brian J. McEnerney still had trouble believing that 19 days earlier he had just arrived at the division after more than five months of training. "I'll probably be shaking right before I hook up," McEnerney said. "But I'm more worried about my performance once I hit the ground."

One day earlier, Pvt. Steven G. Smith wondered what he'd be thinking as he boarded the aircraft. "I'll probably be thinking, 'Why am I getting ready to jump out of an airplane?' and 'please let my chute open.'" McEnerney and Smith were now getting ready to parachute into the

L-AMERICAN

darkness 800 feet over the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La., and spend the next month in "real" Army training with more than 650 other paratroopers from the 3rd Battalion, 325th Infantry Regiment.

While this was a new experience for them, for the majority of the battalion and the 15,000 paratroopers assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, N.C., it was just another day in the life of an "All-American" soldier.

Twice the Volunteer

Each year more than 5,000 soldiers are assigned to the division. Two-thirds of them come to the unit directly after graduating from basic training, advanced individual training and airborne school.

Getting there requires them to volunteer twice: the first time when they enlist and a second time when they volunteer for jump school.

(Above) Soldiers new to the 82nd Airborne Division must perform a first jump in preparation for scheduled unit exercises. (US Army Photo)

"Every opportunity we get, we train them on something," Feliciano said. "Then we grill them to see how much they retain."

"Everyone I knew was going to college, then they would go and join the rat race," McEnerney said in explanation of why he volunteered. "I thought joining the Army would be exciting. I had also read some books about the airborne and thought it would be neat to jump out of planes."

After months learning basic soldier skills, job specialties and airborne procedures, new paratroopers arrive at the 82nd eager to find what life in the division is like. The 82nd Replacement Detachment is the first stop.

"Our objective is to make sure when 'Joe' signs into his unit, he's ready to deploy within 18 hours," said Staff Sgt. James Kates, the detachment's senior platoon sergeant.

During their week of paperwork, briefings and physical training, soldiers continue to wear the Battle Dress Uniform soft cap, rather than the distinctive maroon berets that identify them as paratroopers.

(Right) PFC McEnerney changes the barrel of an M-60 machine gun during one of the squad's many training opportunities before their jump at JRTC. (US Army Photo)

"It lets us easily identify new soldiers," said detachment First Sergeant James Matthews. "This way, if they make a mistake, we know to show them the correct way to do it rather than treating them like they've been in the division a while." When the new paratroopers finally don their trademark headgear, they're greeted by representatives from their new units and escorted down Ardennes Street to where they'll spend their tour with the 82nd.

America's Guard of Honor

New paratroopers usually spend their first couple of weeks adjusting to how the division, their new unit and teammates do things. This includes more paperwork and briefings to prepare them for the possibility of boarding a plane bound for somewhere in the world in 18 hours. Also during this time, the new paratroopers will endure long hours completing unit and physical training.

"I expected to be challenged during this time," said Pvt. Ryan Draeger, a utilities equipment repair specialist with Company B, 82nd Forward Support Battalion. "I want to learn and progress, and to have a little more freedom than I did at basic."

For McEnerney and Smith, their first days with Weapons Squad, 1st Platoon, Company B, were spent not only signing papers, but also getting ready for "war," as the battalion prepared for the JRTC deployment. Preparation included a crash course in how the squad conducts business.

"We've had a lot of equipment layouts," Smith said. "We've also had classes on breaching obstacles, vehicle identification and the weapons used in the squad." They also worked through maneuver drills with their squad, to make sure everyone knew what to do and when to step up in a combat situation, just in case the unit started taking casualties, said Staff Sgt. Rodney Feliciano.

That "stepping up" could happen at any time during their mission. The two new soldiers were assigned as ammunition carriers on machine-gun crews, but if a crew member were taken out of action, the new soldiers would have to have the skill and confidence to take over. They must also know how the squad conducts patrols, and how to alert their teammates without alerting the enemy.

(Above) Division paratroopers routinely train at Fort Bragg and at the training centers at FortPolk, La., and Fort Irwin, Calif. (US Army Photo)

"Every opportunity we get, we train them on something," Feliciano said. "Then we grill them to see how much they retain." That constant preparation helped the two feel more confidant about the mission, "but, JRTC will be the real test," Smith said.

No Time to Unwind

When they're not training, paratroopers will find ways to relax, such as going to a movie or visiting the Atlantic coast, but for McEnerney and Smith, there was a lot of catching up to do. To help make sure the two were ready, squad members pitched in to make sure the new members had what they needed for the mission.

Their roommates helped them get their gear together and trained them on some of their equipment, Feliciano said. But the two new soldiers also had to perform a first jump with the unit in preparation for their jump into JRTC.

"That was an easy one," McEnerney said when his first division jump was completed. "The one into JRTC is the one that scares me. I've never jumped with that much equipment before."

Put on Your Parachutes

Bad weather caused a one-day delay in the mission. "Everyone was cheering at the news," Smith said. "I asked, 'Are we not jumping today?' and everyone was cheering at the bad weather in Louisiana."

But the next day, the battalion and its support elements were rigged up and waiting to load. "This is what I expected with being here," McEnerney said. "But I didn't expect to be going on a field training exercise this soon after arriving."

Even with the short time to prepare, Feliciano said, they would do well on the ground. And as they boarded the aircraft, the two new paratroopers were poised to join the ranks of other soldiers who have come before them and become "All-Americans."

For more information about the United States Army, call 1-800-USA-ARMY or visit www.goarmy.com

(Right) With each jump, soldiers gain the skill and confidence that mark each member of the 82nd Airborne Division. (US Army Photo)

Enchanted Expedi

Airmen Find ISTRES, FRANCE the Best Kept Deployment Se

Story by 1st Lt. Carie A. Seyd

Originally published in Airman Magazine, April 2002

Airmen frolic in the Gard River under the highest aqueduct built by the Romans. The Pont du Gard is almost 164 feet high, and more than 900 feet long.

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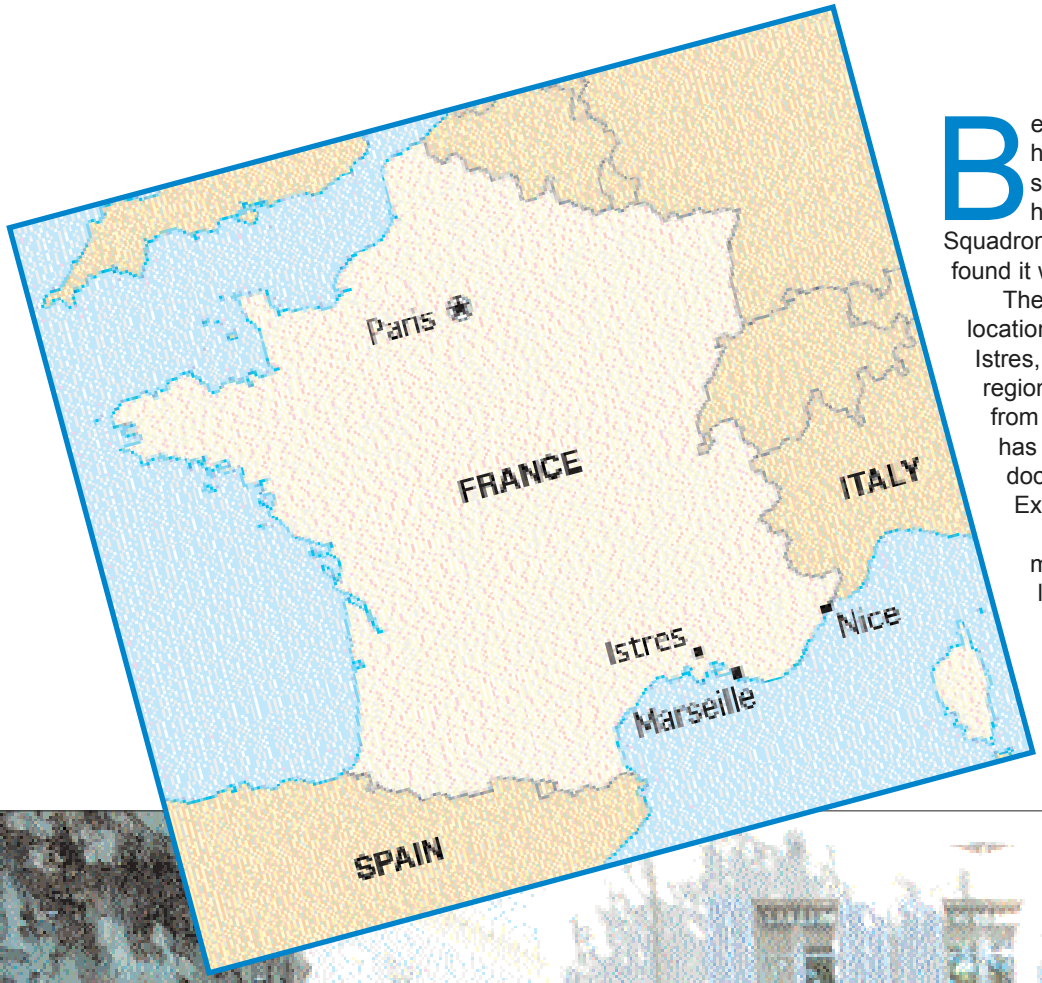
el, USAF and photos by Master Sgt.Keith Reed, USAF



Being deployed for 90 days wasn't exactly how Master Sgt. Scott Lohman planned on spending his summer. But the chief of heavy repair from the 355th Civil Engineer Squadron at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz., found it was like a homecoming.

The Internet helped him learn more about the location on his orders -- French Air Base 25 near Istres, France. Situated between the Provencial region and the French Riviera, about 35 miles from Marseilles, the air base has the essence of southern France at its doorstep while supporting the 16th Expeditionary Operations Group.

The senses are ignited with lively street markets, scented olive oils, colorful lavender fields and the enchanted chirping cicada. It's a visual paradise which may explain why Vincent van Gogh spent so much time painting his masterpieces in nearby Arles.

And when Lohman arrived, he felt

something strangely familiar about the region. Originally from Crestline, Calif., he noticed during his first week that the climate, vegetation and coastline were similar to his home state.

"It's like being stationed in Southern California but everybody speaks French. So I never feel like I'm far from home -- just across the ocean."

His Internet searches provided plenty of information to keep him and anyone who wanted to tag along busy during off-duty hours.

"The travel and history out your back-door are endless. Every time you drive along the coast it's like being in a Bridget Bardot movie."

And Lohman wasn't the only airman pleasantly surprised by the charm and creature comforts of the deployed location.

(Above) Senior Airman Justin D. Kessler, an aircraft cargo specialist from the 437th Airlift Wing at Charleston Air Force Base, S.C., directs a French armored personnel carrier onto a C-17A Globemaster III. Airmen assigned to the 16th Expeditionary Air Base Squadron at Istres loaded French troops and heavy equipment onto several C-17s bound for Afghanistan.

Since there's no lodging on base, deployed airmen are billeted at small, family-run hotels in the area. At one hotel, airmen can enjoy gourmet French meals poolside for 50 francs or about $7.

Assigned to 5th Services Squadron at Minot Air Force Base, S.D., Staff Sgt. Markus Nehlsen compared this deployment to Saudi Arabia.

"We slept on cots in tent city at Prince Sultan Air Base when I was there. Here you have your own room, your own bathroom. Because you have more time to enjoy the area after hours, this is more like a vacation than other deployments," Nehlsen said.

"Usually you're locked down, and you're lucky if you can get off base on other deployments," he said. "I've seen both sides of the deployment spectrum, and in the desert, the camaraderie was stronger. But there's no comparison in location."

Staff Sgt. Brian Schulenberg, who's stationed with Nehlsen stateside, agreed. He had been to Saudi Arabia twice, and lived in a tent for six months in Panama.

"There aren't many of these deployments in the Air Force," he said. "It's too good to be true."

Despite the tranquility of the area, there was plenty that kept these airmen busy during the duty day. Superintendents were always on standby, and something as minor as a power surge could send them headed to base to get things back online.

"Electrical stuff is not my forte, Lohman admitted. I'm a 'dirt boy.' I just turn on the light switch."

But the four civil engineer airmen who are on location have to quickly learn about every aspect of their career field. They must take care of all fire prevention systems, hazardous materials, contractors and even cleaning the huge hangar floor that could hold approximately 55 basketball courts.

The active duty airmen worked to support Guard units running the refueling mission. Working with the National Guard was a "big picture" view of the total force that few of them had experienced.

"On this deployment, I've learned how all the pieces of the mission fit together," Lohman said.

The learning continued after hours at their hotels. New experiences like Patanque (a type of lawn bowling pronounced pay-tonk), stand-up toilets, aggressive French drivers and roundabouts made lasting impressions on those visiting the country for the first time. But the most memorable experiences were culinary. Ordering food was humorous for a few of the deployed members, especially those who didn't speak French.

"One guy wanted a steak," Lohman said. "Once it arrived, I thought he was going to throw up. He ordered steak tartar. He paid $8 a pound for a lump of uncooked hamburger with a raw egg on it."

While some learned of the differences in French culture, others were surprised at the similarities between the French and Americans. Although Schulenberg expected his not knowing the language would be a barrier, he was surprised at how many locals spoke English.

"I've enjoyed watching local people do things similar to Americans," Nehlsen said. "But the culture is so different from what I have seen. I'm not used to the style of clothes."

Although the deployment was more pleasant than most, there were drawbacks.

"It's expensive here," Lohman said. "So anyone headed this way needs to make sure their travel card has a high limit."

The family separation has been the most difficult aspect for Schulenberg.

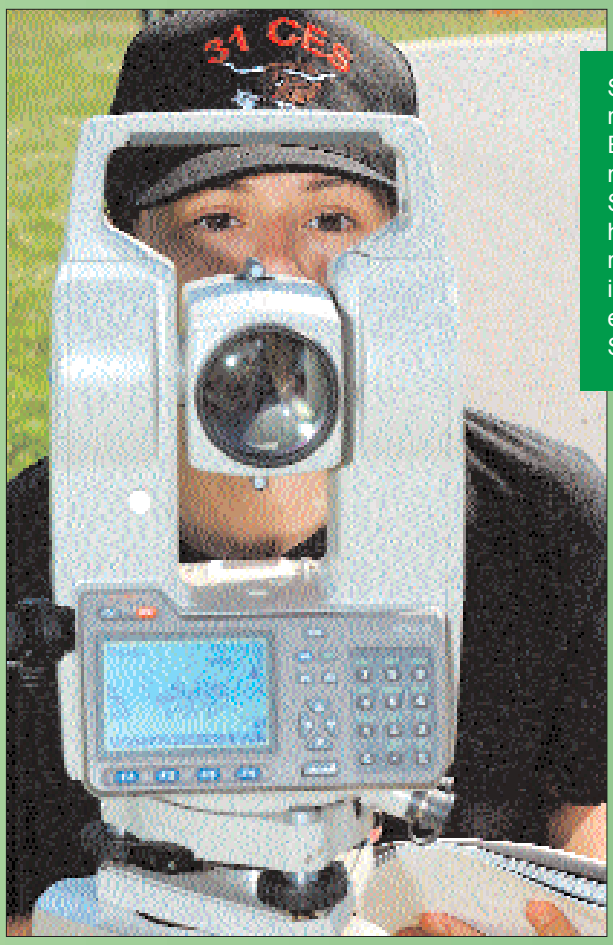
"It gets tough being away from your family for three months. The worst part is seeing people coming and going, knowing they're going home and you're not," he said. "This was a once in a lifetime opportunity that I wish my family could have experienced too. I never thought, being from Iowa, that I would ever come to southern France."

(Left) Local markets not only give airmen a crash course in French culture, but they're also an affordable place to purchase gifts for families back home. Staff Sgt. Brian Schulenberg (from right), Staff Sgt. Markus Nehlsen and Master Sgt. Scott Lohman sample a variety of cured olives at a street market in Aix-en-Provence, France.

For more information about the United States Air Force, call 1-800-423-USAF or visit www.airforce.com

Around the Services

Leadership is instilled in recruits early on at the U.S. Navy Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes, IL. In the fleet, rank comes with more responsibilities and this is stressed daily during their basic training. (Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Preston Keres)



Senior Airman Marcela Trice, an engineering assistant from the 31st Civil Engineer Squadron, writes down ground measurements taken from her Total Station Surveyor on June 17. The TSS helps give detailed and specific measurements to ensure plans for roads, buildings and other construction are safe and effective. (Photo by Senior Airman Stephen Schester)

Bicyclists start race 3 of the U.S. Forces Europe Mountain Bike Series on June 15. Despite challenging conditions 25 competitors finished the race which consisted of two or three grueling laps, depending on category, at 8.9 kilometers each. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Dave Ahlschwede)

A Stryker Interim Armored Vehicle is driven away from a C-130 Hercules on June 21 as loadmasters from the 314th Airlift Wing at Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark., look on during exercise Millennium Challenge 2002, during a rehearsal for the Army Transformation Experiment 2002. The experiment, scheduled to kick off at the National Training Center on July 29, will involve four Strykers being transported using C-130 aircraft. (Photo by Sgt. Tom Bradbury)

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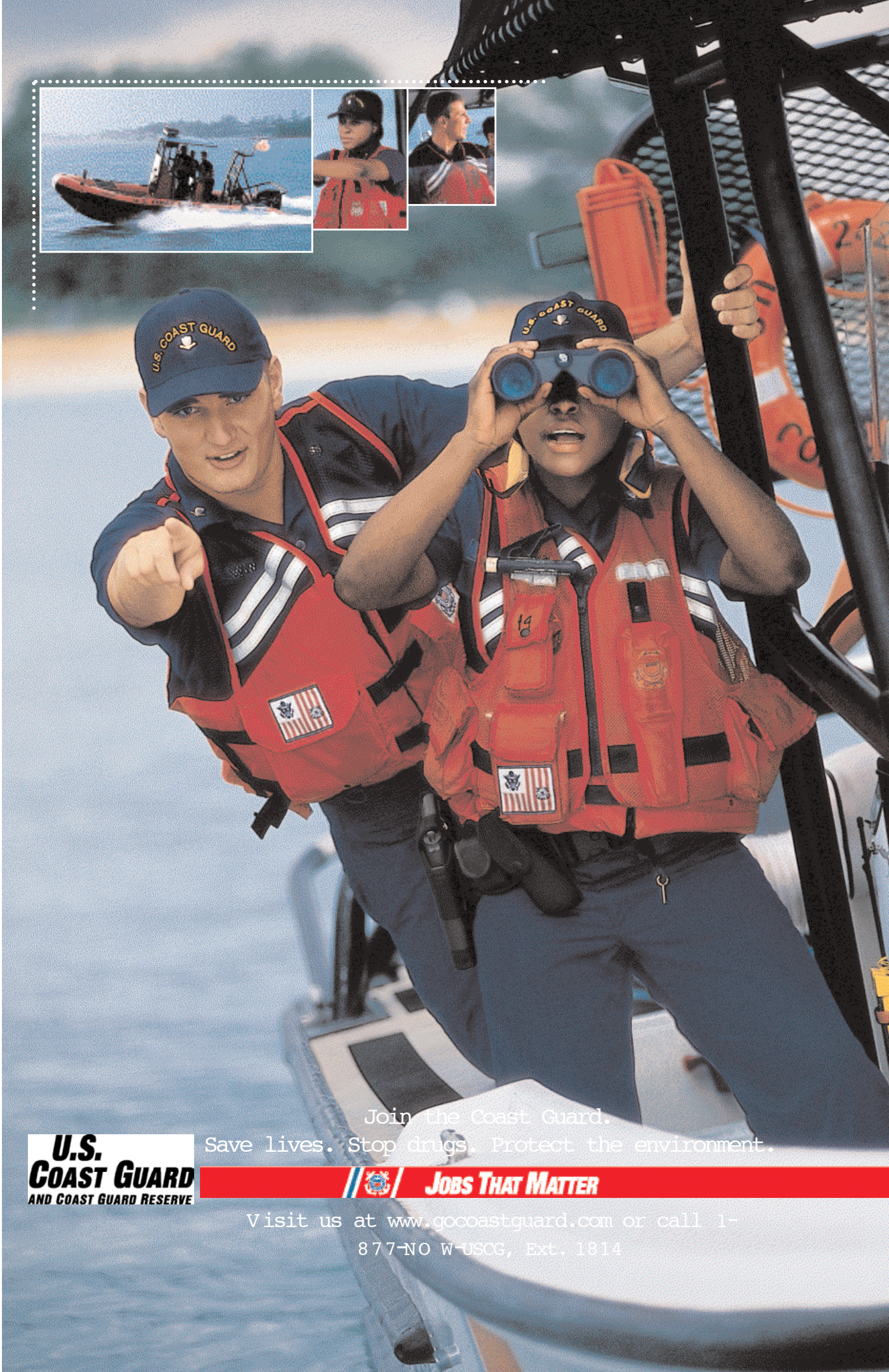

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